VOLUME II NUMBER IV

THE WIND AND THE RAIN

Founded by Michael Allmand

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TEMPEST

Tempest is a collection of essays, allegories and fantasies : (the letter as a form of writing is sometimes included). In the first series there were contributions from Denys Val Baker, Peter Stafford Dickens, Leslie D. Knights, W. S. Graham, Alan Storey, Anna Kavan and Eric Nixon. Of this number there are still a few copies left : one shilling and sixpence post free. The second series will appear during 1945. Manuscripts are invited and will be given careful consideration. Details for the Publication Date of this number will be announced later.

AUDITORIUM

Auditorium will be a Review of the Theatre. It will not be published until after the war. In the meantime those who are interested in this publication as either prospective contributors or subscribers are asked to write direct to this Office for further information. It may be pointed out that the Editorial policy of this magazine will not be to poach on the ground already covered by *The Stage*, *The Playgoer* or *The Theatre World*. Instead it is intended that it shall deal with all those who have helped in the making of the history of the stage. Occasional articles on contemporary playwrights, actors and men concerned with the living theatre will be published.

THE WIND AND THE RAIN

The Wind and the Rain will no longer be appearing as a quarterly. Instead numbers will appear as often as possible—every effort being made to maintain four per year. The Editors regret making this decision, but owing to their presence in the Armed Forced they are faced with no alternative. With this number, however, they are able to revert to their original price of one shilling. Those who have already placed subscriptions will accordingly be credited. They have been able to take this step due to the most loyal support they have met with from both their subscribers and contributors. For this their best thanks are due.

All manuscripts submitted must be accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope if their return is desired. A verdict on all manuscripts sent will be given within one month. Translations may also be submitted.

PHŒNIX PRESS

EDITORIAL

THIS magazine made its first appearance in January, 1941. Admitting that this was not the most propitious time to appear—and eliminating those who have decided to pass over our existence—every so often we see ourselves mentioned: sometimes by other similar little reviews, sometimes by the weekly journals, and occasionally by the daily press. Over all these notices there hangs a cloud of obscurity. With this in mind we propose re-defining our position here and now. [Details of a more pedestrian type will be found at the foot of the opposite page].

As one of our contributors points out in this number: 'Ours is a superficial age, and a superficial age is one which has separated itself from the depths of being, which is aware of itself only on the social level. Superficiality and a merely social awareness are companions.' Since this is our present predicament, and since any political (or social) philosophy derives its sanction from ethics which, in their turn, derive their sanction from religion, it follows that we can only hope to evade disaster by a return to the eternal source of all truth. At the moment we have lost our sense of values and with them our vision of reality. That the arrival of a famous film star is acclaimed with the same mighty headlines that are accorded to the passing of an Educational Bill is proof enough: indeed nowhere does there seem to be any sense of proportion. Then to crown these matters as a last-ditch resort psycho-analysis has been called in: so as to forgive our own misdeeds and sins we have allowed the psychiatrist to tell us that the fault lay not in ourselves, but in that we are underlings to a psychological determinism: his brotherhood has, as it were, become a Twentieth Century Priesthood. Yet valuable as some of his palliatives may be what is wanted is something more than a pure understanding of mental processes; such an understanding of course is always helpful, but it can never be more than a half cure for the world's disease. The healing power which is required lies in a Christianity that may become a life-centre and so integrate the whole person; and this is not to say, as some have in the past pre-supposed, that we are Pacifist. We shall endeavour to define more clearly what we mean by Christianity.

We believe that Christianity is no myth, but a reality: that it has not dated like an antimacassar, but that it is eternally present: that without a return to Christian concepts the world will not become stablised again: that these concepts must be created by each for himself and that mass-thinking on these matters will be to no avail. It is no use relying on a vague sort of Humanitarianism to see us through. More recently spiritual and financial values have been

placed together to equate an unknown quantity—Humanitarianism. For us when Humanitarianism takes on such a form it seems little more than the backwash of Christianity whilst being, at the same time, one of the first steps towards the totalitarian state. In the final analysis this species of an impersonal love of mankind, as Max Schaler has said, is a reaction against God. Something very much more positive is needed. When Christ died on the Cross it was not just so that the standards of respectability could be maintained; it was so we might be saved from our sins. In comprehending this all-embracing truth we must cast aside all the false freedoms that we have let accrue in the past, and in particular in the last twenty years in Europe. We must cast aside these freedoms to find the one freedom that matters: the one freedom for which there are no placards and for which each must discover alone and anew in himself. We speak of free-will. Without this freedom we are the automatons which psychological determinism would so readily have us. Again with this freedom—and it is a freedom against whose bulwarks all material standards become invalid—we shall be able to see time in terms of eternity: it is something that may be acquired by all, but has been lost by almost all for it can only be created from within and not from without.

These are some of the beliefs for which the Directorate of this magazine stands.

NOTE

The article *On Beethoven*, by Robin Atthill, consists of some extracts taken from an essay that The Opus Press will publish later. We thank them for their co-operation in this matter.

REVIEWING VERSUS CRITICISM

JOHN ROWLAND

ONE of the paradoxes of our day is that never has the art of criticism been at a lower ebb, in spite of the fact that more journals devote space to reviews of books, concerts, plays, and films than ever before. It does not seem to be sufficiently appreciated by the public at large that reviewing and criticism are two distinct things, not to be confused.

The great literary critics of England—Coleridge, Hazlitt, Johnson, De Quincey—would have regarded the present craft of reviewing as being totally beneath their notice. Only one or two books, in fact, of the last few years deserve even the momentary attention of the genuine critic. F. L. Lucas's *Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal* is one of the few works of criticism which can be re-read with pleasure and profit, while, in spite of a certain amount of unnecessary mystification, the late Colin Still's *The Timeless Theme* deserves notice. For genuine criticism in our day we have to go to the small collections of short prose and verse pieces. *Kingdom Come*, *The Wind and the Rain*, *Wales*, *Now*, *Million*, and such-like collections contain more valuable matter on the stuff of literature than ten years' copies of *John o' London's Weekly* or the *Times Literary Supplement*.

Why should this be so? I have argued elsewhere* for the establishment of a satisfactory standard of criticism in our time, and a decision as to whether, say, T. S. Eliot is really a more important poet than Tennyson, or James Joyce a more valuable guide to the writing of novels than Dickens. These are the sort of problems which the philosophic critic would rejoice to argue. He would not be concerned to discover a masterpiece each week, which could be conveniently forgotten the week after.

Only, in fact, in one field of modern literature have recent years brought satisfactory criticism, and that, curiously enough, is the most highly commercialised of all forms of literature—the detective story. Miss Dorothy Sayers, in her introductions to the three volumes of *Short Stories of Mystery*, *Detection and Horror*, which she edited for Victor Gollancz, showed how closely standards of criticism could be argued, and then H. Douglas Thomson, in his interesting book *Masters of Mystery*, wrote at some considerable length of the development of this type of fiction, and gave the detective-story addict some idea of what standards should be applied to the kind of fiction which he liked. Recently, moreover, we have had an importation from the U.S.A. in the shape of Mr. Howard

* 'Wanted: A Standard of Criticism,' in *The Wind and the Rain*, Winter, 1944.

Haycraft's *Murder for Pleasure*, which is a really satisfactory study of the way in which the detective story has evolved from Poe to Michael Innes.

It should be noted, however, that these people have not been attempting to do orthodox reviewing of detective fiction. Miss Sayers, it is true, was for a time a reviewer, and most people will look back with some nostalgia to the days when she pilloried bad writing each week in the columns of the *Sunday Times*. But actually reviewers are rarely good critics, and it is well to face that fact.

The question I should, however, like to put before the readers of these pages is this: why cannot similar studies of the 'straight' novel be produced? In poetry we have T. S. Eliot's *The Use of Poetry, and the Use of Criticism*, but I think that Eliot would be the first to admit that his findings were merely tentative, and that something far more deep-rooted is needed before any real standards of poetical criticism can be evolved.

As to the novel—well, what books have we? J. B. Priestley wrote a little book on the English novel which was more noteworthy for what it omitted than for what it included, and Norman Collins, in *The Facts of Fiction*, produced a kind of Cook's tour of the field of English fiction which might have provided a slight guide to the curious reader as to what to avoid. Then there was Professor Ifor Evans's 'Pelican' Book, *A History of English Literature*, and H. E. Bates's *The Modern Short Story*, which was an excellent survey of a very limited field. But there, I think, we have the lot.

Shall we have to wait for a new generation of critics to arise? If so, I fear that we shall have to wait a long time. Most of those who should be preparing themselves for the difficult task of philosophic criticism are now in the armed forces, and, when the war is over, they will be very hard worked if they are ever to make up for the unfruitful years they have spent.

It will seem, then, that I am not very hopeful of the future of literary criticism. And yet I do not know that this is so. What has been done in the limited sphere of the detective story should be done in wider measure. Whether it is in any way possible will depend largely on the demand of the reading public. If they establish a better standard of taste, then the books of criticism will appear. If the public remains content with the mass-produced novel such as we have recently seen, then criticism will be a dying art.

ECCE INFANS

Intruding angel on our sleeping pain
Disturbing with shrill cry the quiet repose
Where death broods over love's autumnal rose
The living logos echoes and again
Siderial loveliness without a stain
From our imperfect passion shines and glows
In mortal flesh and beauty's eternal snows
Await the soiling drip of temporal rain

In this disordered couch find welcome shroud
Thy weakness till these days of joy be passed
For when thy strength the lightning will defy
And sins we never knew thy glory cloud
We cannot bear thy cross nor at the last
Thy mother stand beside thy calvary

ALEC CRAIG

IL PICCOLO PATRIOTTA PADOVANO

(The Little Patriot of Padua)

EDMONDO DE AMICIS

[This story is taken from *Cuore*, a book for boys of about ten or eleven years of age, which reached great popularity in Italy during the early part of this century. It is described as 'piacevolmente educative,' and is in the form of a boy's diary of a year at school. Interpolated in the diary are twelve 'instructive' stories of which *Il Piccolo Patriotta Padovano* is the first. It is given here in the hope that it may help the English reader to understand the form of patriotism peculiar to modern Italy, a patriotism which is self-conscious rather than aggressive.]

A FRENCH steamboat left Barcelona, a city in Spain, for Genoa, having on board Frenchmen, Italians, Spaniards and Swiss. Among them was a boy of eleven years old, poorly dressed and all by himself, who kept apart from the others, like a wild animal, watching them suspiciously. And there was every reason why he should be suspicious. Two years before, his father and mother who were peasants from round about Padua, had sold him to the head man of a travelling circus. With blows and kicks and starvation this man taught him the tricks of a circus clown, and then took him across France and Spain, thrashing him often and giving him little to eat. When they had come to Barcelona, the boy could no longer stand up to the beatings and the hunger, for he was reduced to a pitiful state, and he ran away from his cruel master and sought protection from the Italian Consul. The latter, on a sudden impulse, had put him on board this steamboat, and had given him a letter for the chief of police at Genoa, asking that the boy should be sent back to his parents—to the very parents who had sold him like a beast. The poor boy was ailing and in rags. He had been given a second class cabin. Everyone stared at him; a few asked him questions; but he never replied, and seemed to hate and despise them all, for the misery and hard times that he had gone through had saddened him and lowered his spirit. Nevertheless, three of the passengers were so persistent with their questions that they succeeded in loosening his tongue, and in a few rough words, a mixture of Venetian, Spanish and French, he told his story. These three passengers were not Italian, but they understood, and partly through pity, partly because they had been drinking, they gave him some money, joking and egging him on to tell them more. Then they went into their saloon and straight away, wanting to show off, all three of them gave him still more money, saying: Take this!—Take this as well—and they made the money ring on the table. The boy pocketted everything, thanking them quietly in his surly manner,

but for the first time with a smile and a kindly look. Then he climbed up to his bunk and drew the curtain and stayed quiet, wondering what was going to happen to him. With this money he could have a good feed on board ship, after going short for two years ; he could buy a jacket, when he went ashore at Genoa, after wearing rags for two years ; and also, when he took the money home, he could be sure of a rather better welcome from his father and mother than he would have got if he had arrived empty-handed. That money was a little fortune for him. He comforted himself with these thoughts behind the curtain of his cabin, while the three passengers sat chatting at the dining table in the middle of the second-class saloon. They were drinking and talking of their travels and of the countries they had seen, and, from one thing to another they came to discuss Italy. One started to complain about the hotels, another about the railways, and then all getting roused together they set to work to run down everything. One of them would rather have travelled in Lapland ; another said that he had found nothing but cheats and brigands in Italy ; the third that the Italian clerks couldn't even read. An ignorant people—repeated the first.—Dirty, added the second.—Thie . . —exclaimed the third ; and would have said 'thieves,' but he couldn't finish his words. A storm of little coins and half-lire fell upon their heads and shoulders, and bounced on the table and on the floor with a terrific din. All three jumped to their feet in a rage, looking round them, and getting another handful of coins full in the face.—Take your money back—said the boy scornfully, thrusting out his head from behind the curtain of the cabin ;—I won't take charity from anyone who insults my country.

Translated by NORMAN NICHOLSON

SO IN HIS GIFT OF LIVING

So in his gift of living
  He shall weave life's suffering fantasy,
Hear the carnal chorus,
  Breathe the blood-filled air.

On the sands he shall build
  His temple and palace,
His worm shall be love,
  His pain shall be prayer.

For man is a hunter
  Who lives for his prizes,
Shall reap in a garden,
  Shall master a mountain.

Then hunter beware
  Of the barren plateau :
The season's plague,
  The season's fashion.

And man is a mayfly
  Who must part with his possessions ;
His tree shall wither
  And his treasures shall rust.

In the incredible hour
  When passions be legends,
The devil shall sleep
  And the madmen be just.

HUGO MANNING

THE POET'S PERSPECTIVES

D. S. SAVAGE

OUT of the several names of those poets whose work provided the opportunity, some ten or twelve years back, for the proclamation of a 'poetic renascence,' three in particular have impressed themselves upon the mind of the reading public. There is no denying that Auden, to some extent, and Spender and MacNeice, to a greater degree, are gifted writers, that their achievement justifies some of the recognition they have been accorded. But, as for example with T. S. Eliot, so with these poets, a too uncritical acceptance of everything they write, after the initial 'establishment' of their reputations on the basis of early achievement, has to some extent impeded the recognition of the noticeable process of deterioration that has, in the work of each of them, set in. The deterioration is most noticeable in Auden, the least intrinsically interesting of the three. But it is apparent, too, in Spender's work. Auden reached the limit of his achievement in his first book and thereafter fell into rapid and progressive disintegration. Spender, after writing some memorable poems, the best of which occupy the latter part of *Poems* and the first part of *The Still Centre*, has suffered a loss of power less marked but still disconcerting enough. MacNeice appeared at first to be a poet of greater inherent potentialities, of greater personal distinction. His *Poems* is certainly one of the most distinguished of recent collections of verse, but *The Earth Compels*, although it contains some fine pieces, reveals ominous signs of strain, while *Plant and Phantom*, and subsequent poems as they have appeared in periodicals, show a decline from integrality to flashiness and reportage. In each case here we have a writer reaching a state of poetic integration for a comparatively brief period quite early on in his career and then falling away more or less abruptly into a state of disintegration. The question which concerns me is, why should this marked process of deterioration have set in, in the work of these three contemporaries? What quality have they in common which might reasonably be regarded as their weak point—the point from which the deteriorative process has started? And I am inclined further to enquire, what is it, which is present in the work of the masters of poetry—writers like Hopkins, Hardy, Yeats—which is absent from theirs?

Both Auden and Spender may be regarded as *social* poets. That is to say, their chief preoccupation, and the central theme of their poetry, is 'society.' Now the orientation of these two poets, with their early optimistic social messianism, has obviously been rudely negatived by the trend of events in society since the time when their

early attitude was fixed, and this cannot have been without effect upon their inner equilibrium as poets. With MacNeice such an explanation does not meet the case. But while the decline of Auden and Spender seems to reveal the inadequacy of one particular social attitude, MacNeice serves to show the general inadequacy of a poetic orientation which is founded upon a primarily social view of reality, a view, that is to say, whose perspectives are limited to those of social existence.

MacNeice has a stronger sense of individuality than either Auden or Spender—or Day Lewis for that matter—and it is no accident that his best work reaches a greater degree of concrete complexity than theirs, and that its rhythm is more strongly marked. But altnough MacNeice was never an Utopian idealist, with gaze fixed upon a visionary future, his acceptance of the present has a social bias as pronounced as that of his contemporaries. Where they turn towards a social order of the future, and 'interpret' the life of the present in its light, MacNeice, more self-consciously 'bourgeois,' accepts the life and the values of the existing order, that is all.

In MacNeice's first collection of poems, *Blind Fireworks*, which was published in 1929, one is aware of an acute elegiac sensibility exercised upon the poet's lonely reveries, his fancy flaring out into fantastic flamboyant imagery informed by a humorous or melancholy defeatism. The notes recurrently struck are those of loneliness and nostalgia, the imagery is that of personal fantasy extending in isolation. One receives the impression of a solitary, sensitive individual *amusing himself*. The indeterminate, rambling form of the poems and their dream-like imagery are effects of this individualistic, non-social writing into the void. The symbols of ultimate realities appear in these poems, but they are played with in a merely fanciful manner, treated as pseudo-realities which belong to the world of dreams and nightmares outside the border of the waking world.

Between *Blind Fireworks* and the next collection, *Poems*, there was an interval of six years, during which time MacNeice's growth towards maturity took the form of a greater awareness of society, of the claims of the outer world. Here there is a reconciliation of the poet's subjective dream- and fantasy-world with that of social existence, a reconciliation whose effects are to be seen particularly in such a poem as the excellent 'Perseus,' the nightmare or fantasy world of lonely, personal life moving away to form a shadowy background to the outward scene. In the 'Eclogue for Christmas' it is the poet's personal situation and attitude which give coherence and power to his ruminations over a decadent civilisation. From this position of relative equilibrium, however, with its resultant tautening of the structure of his verse, MacNeice moved increasingly further away from his centre in personal life towards the life of society. The excessive loneliness revealed by the early poems is over-compensated by an equally excessive sociability. In *The Earth Compels*, passing over a handful of integrated lyrics, one discovers a pro-

nounced peripheral trend in the poems written about an occasion—'Leaving Barra,' 'On Those Islands,' 'Passage Steamer,' 'Eclogue from Iceland,' as well as 'Christmas Shopping' and 'Rugby Football Excursion.' These are poems achieved from the perimeter of the circle of the poet's awareness. They are good enough poems of their kind, and they bear still the distinctive MacNeice signature, but they mark the beginnings of a disastrous movement towards the breakup of poetic integrality. The more recent work unfortunately confirms the impression of disintegration. MacNeice is still a talented writer, but he has failed in his task of continuously informing his perception of the world with his personal quality. *Plant and Phantom*, published three years later, contains a miscellany of verses which do not relate to any common centre, which are mechanical rather than organic, fragments rather than unities, and which conspicuously lack a powerful and compelling inner rhythm. It is a better book than most of MacNeice's contemporaries are capable of writing, but it will not bear comparison with the earlier work.

Here, then, we have a poet of uncommon ability unable to maintain a satisfactory equilibrium as a poet between the centre and the circumference of life, and this I think may unequivocally be attributed to a failure of that deep seriousness which might have enabled him to set life in its perspectives. This lack of final seriousness it is which finds expression at first in a homage to surface-values and later in an involuntary descent into triviality and reportage. And this surely cannot be without connection with this writer's industrious production of ephemeral prose-works like *Zoo* and *I Crossed the Minch*, and more recently, his surprising involvement in the machinery of Government war-propaganda, his work for the B.B.C. and his production of pamphlets for the Ministry of Information. MacNeice's social orientation is not at all unconscious; in his book, *Modern Poetry : A Personal Essay* (1938) he expressly declares for such a social bias in the poet. It is small wonder that this is a superficial work—of the poetic character, all that MacNeice can find to say is much on the level of the following: 'I would have a poet able-bodied, fond of talking, a reader of the newspapers, capable of pity and laughter, informed in economics, appreciative of women, involved in personal relationships, actively interested in politics, susceptible to physical impressions.' This, remarked a reviewer in *New Verse*, at the time 'describes pretty well the person who writes MacNeice's best poetry.' But it appears that what MacNeice would have a poet be bears only a slight resemblance to the masters of poetry as they have in fact revealed themselves, through their life and through their work. In every case they are men who have written from the centre of their existence, and not from the periphery. They have not allowed themselves to become absorbed by society.

Auden, MacNeice and Spender are not of course the only poets who have suffered a disruption of poetic continuity through an inability or refusal to penetrate beneath the surface of life and relate

themselves in some way to the ultimates of existence. I do not think I am altogether in error in attributing to some such failure the sudden cessation of poetic creativeness in an older poet whose talent places him in the same rank as MacNeice—Edgell Rickword. This poet, after some preliminary stages, reached full articulation in one of the most interesting and impressive books of verse published in our time—the *Invocations to Angels*, published in 1928. Here again the outlook is predominantly social. It is the social scene that is portrayed, the city-world with its outward squalor and meanness and its inner futility and disgust. But with this book, Rickword reached a full stop. Unable to accept the hopelessness of life on this level, he turned to an undisguisedly social interpretation of life and became a Marxist, after which he ceased to write any poetry of consequence, a few dead, flat pieces of propaganda and satire revealing his complete creative sterility. Among poets of a later generation than MacNeice, too, there are some who seem to be in a similar situation. George Woodcock, who published in 1940 a distinctive collection of poems, *The White Island*, poems which indicate some attempt at a personal response to experience, has moved to a more deliberately 'social' position, writing political articles and pamphlets for the anarchist movement and poems which are predominantly exercises in social observation and interpretation. His second book, *The Centre Cannot Hold* (1943), shows this movement towards a social orientation, and shows also, in a lesser degree of course than MacNeice or Rickword, a commensurate failure of rhythm. It is too early to speak definitively about this writer, but his present progress towards disintegration, like that of another young poet, Keidrych Rhys, shows that this problem of orientation is for every gifted poet today a very real one.*

Technically, these poets' failure may be described as a *failure of rhythm*, but when we come to enquire what 'rhythm' is we find that their failure is equivalent to a failure of personality. Rhythm is not an outward but an interior and unanalysable quality. It is that quality of inner coherence which runs through the work of every creator and which, connecting everything in his work to an invisible centre, endows it with a unique and inimitable character. This is the integrality, the consistency-to-itself which so strongly marks the work of the masters of poetry, and which makes it impossible to mistake their work for that of any other writer.

But what is meant by this inner consistency? What is the distinctively poetic faculty which projects itself in this manner? The poetic faculty, I think, may be described as that of grasping and conveying the *wholeness* of experience. And that implies a total apprehension of experience as such, in a way which does not split it up into categories or 'subjects.' But to apprehend experience in its

* I would apply these remarks also to another poet, Julian Symons. See the progression from *Confusions About X* (1939) to *The Second Man* (1944).

totality (or, perhaps, experiences in their totality) it is necessary to see it or feel it in its ultimate perspectives. If experience is not perceived with reference to its conditioning ultimates, then indeed everything is relative to everything else, and only piecemeal perception is possible.

And in fact, all poets whose work as a whole has this inner coherence and continuity, have seen or felt experience, however, intermittently, in its ultimate perspectives. They have not limited their perception to that which occurs on the surface of life, on the plane of social existence, but have seen existence in its perspectives as at once limited by (as a whole) and interpenetrated with (as to the parts) the fundamental and inescapable conditions of human existence, by the mysteries of birth and death and the enigmas of time and change. It is the most telling weakness of the 'social' poets of the nineteen-thirties that they reveal no awareness of these fundamentals of existence. They have no knowledge of the heights or the depths. In them, everything has a *social* reference—even the individual life itself. Absolutes are abolished, and society, one might say, is given the position of a false absolute. But to set experience in the perspective of society is to destroy the possibility of perceiving its total nature. A temporary counterpoise may be achieved between the centre and the circumference of the poet's awareness, but such counterpoise will be conditional and contingent only, as we have seen to be the case with Spender and MacNeice. To set experience in the perspectives of the limits of existence, on the other hand, immediately implies the relating of society to the individual, for he is the meeting-place for these facts of birth, death, time and change. The poet who has centred himself in personal existence and who perceives experience in these perspectives at once effects a change in the relationship between the individual and society. He is not tempted to write from the periphery of his circle of perception, to run away into reportage and verse-making. He is enabled, granted talent, seriousness and integrity, to grasp experience in its wholeness, to project it concretely, permeated with the inner quality of his unique identity.

Rhythm, then, is essentially a quality of personality, it is an aspect of that inner continuity, itself uniquely personal, which marks the work of the genuine creator. That which emerges from our experience of the poems of Hardy, of Hopkins, of Edward Thomas, of Harold Monro, is an awareness of an intensely *personal* quality, although this has very little to do with oddness or eccentricity. Poets such as these are characterised by their grasp, personal and intense, of the human situation, of their own situation, in its totality. Is it surprising that the most 'personal' poets are those who have most deeply and seriously felt into the total human situation: that the least authentically personal, and therefore the least authentic, are those who have been constrained to live on the surface of life—which means, the level of society?

Personality, indeed, is not realised on the social level, where life is conventional and uniform. Nor is it realised in mere loneliness. It is realised in the world of values, in the perspective of ultimate things. Among contemporaries of some notability, the most completely 'social,' W. H. Auden, is at the same time the most completely devoid of personal rhythm. Dylan Thomas, on the other hand, is an example of a poet whose work reveals a nearly exclusive preoccupation with the conditions of being. It is not accidental that Thomas's poetry is both the most personally original and the most rhythmically compelling of our time.

The point I wish to make is, I think, sufficiently clear, and there seems little need to illustrate it with examples from the work of the poets I have cited. If the reader has not already in his mind some idea of the distinguishing quality which differentiates the outlook and the perspectives of such poets as Thomas Hardy, Edward Thomas, Harold Monro, Allen Tate, Dylan Thomas, from such poets as Auden, Spender, MacNeice and others of lesser talent, then I can only refer him to their work. It is not even necessary to refer to other than English poets, and recent ones at that.

Ours is a superficial age, and a superficial age is one which has separated itself from the depths of being, which is aware of itself only on the social level. Superficiality and a merely social awareness are companions. And Auden (in particular), and the other poets in that category whom I have mentioned, however earnest and sincere their attempts to comprehend their situation, share this superficiality.

It would be quite correct to equate this superficiality with a materialistic outlook and complete absence of religious perception. Am I then advocating a religious attitude on the part of poets?

The matter is not so simple, and cannot be presented in such hasty terms. Nor is it a question of advocating this or that attitude, but of elucidating a certain situation. It is perfectly possible for a poet to be what is commonly called 'religious' and yet to lack all feeling for the ultimates and the depths of existence, while on the other hand a poet may, like Hardy, Monro, Thomas, have this deeply personal feeling for ultimates and yet be lacking in an explicitly religious point of view. Again, merely to import the apparatus of religious devotion or of philosophical speculation into the framework of poetry is to place these things themselves within the limits of the poet's already relative vision. It is the poetry, the acts of apprehension themselves, which must be placed in the perspective of the ultimates of life, and this may wholly obviate abstract, theoretical formulations. Therefore, there is clearly no system or convention, no 'attitude' which it is possible to urge upon poets. Each must work out his own path.

That path, by the very fact of its singularity, is not an easy one, nor are there any short cuts in it. The integrality of poetry is necessarily intimately related to the personal integrality of the poet's life. The burden which is laid upon the poet is that of a

uniquely personal response to experience, and this precludes the following of any system or convention laid down by others. It is this imperative which makes equal nonsense of every group-attitude from the extreme of social-realism with its insistence upon literalism to that of the now-fashionable 'Apocalypticism,' which has been described as a 'deliberate obsession with the mystical and the religious.' All such groups, objectivist and subjectivist alike, foster a manner of writing which, mechanically exploiting certain literary and psychic territory, shows an entire absence of personal rhythm, a depressing and wearisome uniformity which cannot do more than imitate genuine originality. Although poetry of a certain degree of validity may for a time be created out of relative and temporary adjustments between the centre and the circumference of the poet's awareness, continuous, organic creativeness depends upon an individual integrity which seriously and steadily relates the surface to the depths, and which is therefore as completely personal in its approach as in its effects.

ON BEETHOVEN

ROBIN ATTHILL

WHEN Wagner wrote of the *Ninth Symphony*, likening the first movement to a conflict of the soul striving after joy, he summarised with extraordinary accuracy the whole course of Beethoven's life, which we can read within the framework of this gigantic symphony. Even in the opening bars we are filled with fear, when, against an uneasy background of strings, the main theme in all its starkness plunges downward with the terror of lightning, and turns with remorseless strokes to hammer out its cruel challenge, underlined by the elemental fierceness of the drums. It is the conflict of the C minor Symphony on an even grander scale; in the C minor there is nothing which rivals for sheer horror the wild chromatic swirls of the woodwind converging pitilessly upon the bewildered ear; the deliberately chaotic discords of the development look ahead to the beginning of the finale, and only a few fitful gleams of sun light up the darkness. The final agony is in the coda; at first the horns ride serenely above the fray accompanied by the twittering oboes, but in the bass a new and awful chromatic theme moves inexorably up and down, taken up and repeated by the violins as if all earth shuddered at the overwhelming fury of the fate which gripped the human soul. It is the most terrifying moment in all music—more terrifying even than the moment when the trombones usher in the figure of stone that is to drag Don Giovanni to hell—and there is no release except in the cold decisiveness of the

original theme with its menacing drums. And any momentary hopes of calm after the storm are dispelled by the first phrase of the Scherzo; the octave drop and the fierce echo of the drums, a recurrent threat which breaks through the eager onward impulse of the movement. It is worth remarking that the remorselessly insistent rhythm loses its true effect exactly in proportion to the licence with which the conductor disregards Beethoven's indication of tempo. For this Scherzo is no less than a cosmic dance, where, riding upon the wings of the wind, the disembodied soul is whirled with the planets upon their ordered restless course. Not even the serenity of the Trio section with the exquisite scoring can delay the speed, and the very suggestion of a repetition is dismissed with an abruptness and a finality characteristic of Beethoven.

The peace for which we have so far looked in vain comes to us in the *Adagio*:

> Many a green isle needs must be
> In the deep wide sea of Misery,
> Or the mariner, worn and wan,
> Never thus could voyage on—
> Day and night, and night and day,
> Drifting on his dreary way,
> Whilst above, the sunless sky,
> Big with clouds, hangs heavily. . . .

The whole movement breathes the calmness and content of ease after toil, to which everything contributes—the glowing variations upon the main theme, the supreme loveliness of the second subject rising upon the 'cellos, and counterpointed by the violins, like wild roses wreathed over the beauty of a midsummer hedgerow, and the richness of the orchestration throughout, revealing new delights at each hearing.

And upon this interlude of peace there breaks a storm of cacophony, which ushers in the extraordinary prelude to the movement in which Beethoven struggled to bring to a conclusion his apotheosis of the symphony. We have ridden out the storm in all the agony and terror of the first movement; we have sailed alone with restless speed across wide seas of time and space; and we have been refreshed by the halcyon calm of blue midsummer. But in what distant harbour will our voyage end, and what will be our reception there?

> Still one must lead some life beyond,
> Have a bliss to die with dim-descried.

But for Beethoven that bliss was not dim, but daylight clear, shining through the words of Schiller's great *Ode to Joy*, whose full meaning he had pondered for thirty years, and on which he now based the ecstasy of his convictions.

And since the finale was in a sense to vindicate the ways of God to men, only the human voice could be regarded as a satisfactory medium, and since the introduction of the voice into symphonic music was in itself a startling novelty, the transition must be gradual and

the voice must take up the burden at the point where the orchestra must inevitably lay it down.

So much is necessary for an understanding of this strange prelude. Dramatic in the extreme, it is packed with incident and with meaning. After the momentary chaos of sound in which all sense of stability and direction is lost, the basses of the orchestra take up the tale in almost articultae recititative, rising and falling, like the dark swell after a night's storm, while the clouds still lour above the sea's anger, now menacing, now querulous, listless and urgent in turn, pondering, pleading, searching for something yet unrealised. They reject the suggested themes of each of the first three movements, quite emphatically, but at the same time maintaining the sense of expectancy. The adagio theme in fact awakes great eloquence, which in turn is followed by the hint of an entirely new theme. This creates tremendous excitement which culminates in two crisp chords, and then, with a sense of absolute relief, the basses move forward into the first full statement of the theme for which they have so long been searching.

It is without any question one of the most satisfying of all melodies; it has dignity, stability and a perfection of outline. It is repeated in full three times, and each repetition reveals new beauties of orchestral colour, while at the fourth repetition the whole might of the orchestra is released, until, quite suddenly, the splendid rhythm falters, and again the nightmare of hideous din is unleashed; all is uncertainty; and it is at this moment that the human voice is heard, demanding with impassioned eloquence 'more joyful sounds,' and by this invitation serving to unite the orchestra, the soloists and the chorus in their song of joy. From that moment, as Wagner puts it, 'shouting and exultation fill the air,' as the voices are swept onwards in the long drawn out ecstasy of bliss, calling upon the untold millions to share in their rapture. For the amazing thing is the absolute certainty with which Beethoven proceeds from climax to climax with unfaltering purpose and imagination.

How often and how harshly has the choral section of the *Ninth Symphony* been criticised! Its faults are indeed glaring. It is episodic; much of it is unvocal in the sense that it is almost physically impossible for the human voice to do justice to the music, and even then the words are largely inaudible. To all of which one must return the stubborn answer that Beethoven knew very well what he was about; that a genuine lover of music should make the effort to familiarise himself with the words as he has done with the words of the B minor Mass or any other major choral work; that even if Beethoven seems to have been writing for the tongues not of men, but of angels, he was absolutely convinced that only the human voice could convey to humanity his message of joy in widest commonalty spread; and that the more one studies it, the more convincing does the unity of the movement become, the varied moods and aspects of the song of joy blending into a perfect whole. And

if in some of the faster passages the outlines are blurred through faulty reproduction or accoustic difficulties, there are also moments of hushed rapture which can only be compared with the moments in the *Book of Revelation*, and in sudden diminuendos and rallentandos which precede the last moments of apocalyptic exultation, there is a beauty and a splendour which few can fail to acknowledge. 'From the heart of man it came; to the heart of man let it go.'

* * * *

The *Choral Symphony* marks the climax of the tragedy that is Beethoven's life, the sublimation of all his ideals, the culmination of his technical achievement as a musician, and, both in its nature and in the conditions of its first performance, sums up for us three fundamental truths which must be fully grasped if we are to appreciate Beethoven's achievement and his importance for the world of today —these truths are his isolation from society, his striving for perfection of the medium wherein he worked, and finally his realisation of joy through suffering.

Beethoven's isolation from his fellow men is summed up in the terrible moment when a hand touched him on the shoulder and turned him to face the wild enthusiasm of the audience from whom he was utterly separated, alone in the tortured silence of his thoughts, cut off from all those millions whom his deepest passions stirred and for whom he struggled to record his message of hope against the background of the miseries and unrest of a disintegrating society As early as 1800 he could write to his good dear Wegeler, 'I may truly say that my life is a wretched one. For the last two years I have avoided all society, for it is impossible for me to say to people "I am deaf."' And again a year later,—'You can scarcely imagine what a dreary, sad life I have led during the past two years. My weak hearing always seemed to be like a ghost and I ran away from people, was forced to appear a misanthrope, though not at all in my character.' Far from it indeed! For in his heart was that knowledge and love of suffering humanity which we find elsewhere among artists perhaps only in Shakespeare and Dante, and in his music,

> All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
> All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,

found their triumphant expression.

And yet what do we not owe to Beethoven's afflictions? We turn for help to that other lonely and superhuman figure—John Milton.

> When I consider how my light is spent
> Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
> And that one talent which is death to hide
> Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
> To serve therewith my Maker, and present
> My true account. . . .

From his youth Milton had ever declared his intention of accomplishing some great work which alone would repay his debt to his

Creator, and in the famous Trinity MS. we can read the list of subjects to which his mind had turned as the years passed. But is it likely that the mighty epic in which he finally sets out to justify God's ways to man could have been the same but for the twenty years' immersion in the turbid sea of party politics, ten of them in total blindness, the price of his firm conviction of the justice of his cause? Would the belief and experience of the justice of God, the depth and range of thought, the subtlety of argument and felicity of phrase have found the same expression on the lips of a man to whom the world was not dark? And to the outward view what was Milton like? Proud? Querulous? Overbearing? Unforgiving? But in the twilight of his days Jonathan Richardson tells us how he had the good fortune to have another picture of him from an aged clergyman in Dorsetshire, Doctor Wright. 'He found him in a small house, he thinks but one room on a floor. In that, up one pair of stairs, which was hung with a rusty green, he found John Milton, sitting in an elbow chair, black clothes and neat enough, pale but not cadaverous, his hands and fingers gouty and with chalkstones. Among other discourse he expressed himself to this purpose; that was he free from the pain this gave him, his blindness would be tolerable.'

Compare this with the account of Beethoven written by Goethe in 1812 with that lack of generosity which marks all his behaviour towards Beethoven, in unpleasing contrast to the latter's unbounded admiration for the poet. 'I made Beethoven's acquaintance in Teplitz. His talent amazed me; unfortunately he is an utterly untamed personality, not altogether in the wrong, holding the world detestable; but he does not make it any more enjoyable for either himself or others by his attitude. He is, however, to be excused and much to be pitied, as his hearing is leaving him which, perhaps, mars the musical part of him less than the social.' Socially Beethoven must have been in many ways intolerable—rough and clumsy and unaccountable in his moods; withal, no respecter of persons or of the rigid etiquette of the society around. And how much of the false convention attaching to the artistic genius—the studied boorishness, the wild eye and the untamed hair, and the preciosity of dress, apotheosised in the Aesthetic movement of the 'nineties and surviving today in the pages of *Punch*—how far does this conception derive from the tradition of the great Romantics: Beethoven, continually ill, distracted and worried, prisoned in his deafness, and Byron, skulking in self-imposed isolation behind the façade of the legend he had laboured so hard to create.

But Beethoven's music probably suffered less, and in many ways gained inestimably from the deafness by which it was conditioned. Like Milton, he laments the irony of the loss of that one talent which is death to hide. 'Were my profession any other it would not so much matter, but in my profession it is a terrible thing.' In the

Heiligenstadt will he cries out: 'Alas! how could I declare the weakness of a sense which in me ought to be more acute than in others—a sense which formerly I possessed in highest perfection, a perfection such as few in my profession enjoy, or ever have enjoyed.' This was in his thirty-second year; and how far there was to go. At twenty-eight, when his hearing first caused him anxiety, his output was negligible and in 1802, the D major Symphony is only as a foothill approaching the chain of mountain peaks that stretches away into the distance. The access of Beethoven's deafness coincided with the full flowering of his genius; one hesitates to say that it caused or even conditioned it, so unsure and hazardous is our knowledge of the workings of genius. But this we know—that as a result of the spiritual crisis which found expression in the Heiligenstadt will, Beethoven turned aside from the career of virtuoso pianist which had promised to make him a lion in the musical society in Vienna, composing only in his free hours, to express the whole tumultuous stirring of his heart in the vast creative output of the next nine years—from the *Third Symphony* to the *Eighth*; the opera *Leonora*; the *Mass in C*; the *Kreutzer*, *Waldstein* and *Appassionata* sonatas; the fourth and fifth (*Emperor*) piano concertos and the violin concerto; and the *Rasumovsky* quartets, to mention the outstanding landmarks of the period. Further than this, his deafness tended to minimise the sensuous appeal of his music, the sweetness which is the outstanding characteristic of his early work, and to concentrate attention on the thoughts whose exact and final expression in musical form was the labour of his maturity. Much of the alleged obscurity of his later work is due to this fact, that his thought is not distracted by any purely sensuous appeal from its true emotional impulse or from its logical development. There are certain qualities lacking in the music of Beethoven and in the poetry of Milton, qualities that we can easily find in the works of lesser men. But that tremendous concentration of thought, and that clear contemplation of the end and purpose of Creation and of man's place in it, were enormously helped by the physical afflictions which brought to these supreme artists long years of suffering and misery, and which paradoxically enabled them in their different media to express something of this understanding.

MILES PHILIPS

Bring the green candle for this prisoner,
Give him a yellow coat;
Pour him the blessed wine, and twist
The halter for his throat.

Lead him through lemon groves and light,
Guard him with priestly words;
Raise him to your high pedestal
Above the shadowed swords,

And between forests and the shore
While the whip burns with blood,
Turn his grey face to that wide past
Where marvellous dolphins went before
And foam-flagged seas slid cool and vast
And his far islands stood.

LOUIS ADEANE

THREE BARROWS DOWN

In those fields haunted by fear
And a memory of soldiers—
Where the white road curves
From the blackened mill
By Ileden and Womenswold
Towards the tree-capped hill—

There in those summer-gold
And wide-flung pastures
The ear is cozened still
By the bare and empty song
Of evil forgotten days
And echo of ancient wrong;

And walking in the old ways
By the high banks and hedges
I come again to the dark
Three-barrowed wood and hear
In the summer-haunted stillness
That litany of fear ;

And like a subtle illness
Invading blood and tissue
From fields far and near
Creeps the rank smell of fighting,
The infection of the squaddies'
Bare-limbed and red-faced hating :

Whose muscled, belted bodies
Straddle the ditch and hedgeside
With rawboned violence, waiting
For the dark, predestined hour—
The harsh and bitter seeding
Of the dragon-rooted flower.

Their eyes are unheeding
Of the storm-dark horizon
And white-capped water-tower
Pricking the sullen line
Of the wood whose trees conceal
Tombs of an older time.

O betony and self-heal
Be near to salve the wounds
Of warrior and rookie
In the embattled hour :
And give to the queer and lonely
The brief and phallic power

To conquer ; and be only
Unkind to the swing-fed bloke
And pious white-faced sergeant
Who in the vernal hour
With evil would revoke
The dawn, the springing flower.

JOCELYN BROOKE

THE KINGFISHER

An Essay

W. G. BEBBINGTON

TODAY I saw my first kingfisher. For a long time I have wondered if I should ever see one, since, in fact, I first read W. H. Davies's poem at school. The spontaneity and obvious sincerity of Davies's poetry have always seemed to evoke from me what all poets wish to evoke from their readers—a sense of partnership, a sense almost of identity: 'what we have loved others will love, and we will teach them how.' So I have shared Davies's feelings about the kingfisher, the 'lovely bird.' Other birds are lovely of course, but the kingfisher is rarely seen, and so he has the advantage over the swan and the blackbird and the nightingale—that he arouses in us a wondrous curiosity about his beauty, so that we know that if we are lucky enough to see him we shall see beauty for but a moment, especially as once he has seen us he flits away as if disgraced by us and jealous like Narcissus of his own handsome appearance.

He was alone as he is always said to be. Nearby, seagulls screeched hungrily as they swept scythe-like low over the water. But they were many and usual and I was tired of them and their graceful flight. Swans too, floating near the bank in expectation of bread from ladies pushing prams, and ducks, top-heavy and making their vulgar noises—they too were many and ordinary, the same as yesterday, the same as tomorrow.

But he was alone. I saw him suddenly and quite by chance, happening for no special reason to turn towards the small island near the towpath. I saw a sudden flash of bright pale blue, and without thinking I knew what it meant. Then I saw his fine coloured breast, not yellow, not red, not orange, but all these and blends of them, a colouring one may only try to paint and may not precisely name.

He perched for a moment on a low branch, slowly swaying up and down, and I wondered if he had seen me and would he stay so that I might gaze on him and take my fill. But no: he saw me and fled to a further branch, thinking, I suppose, that I could no longer see him. But I could; and on tiptoe—for I would not be cheated—I crept nearer to see him fully again. Vain man that I am! gluttonous for more than the portion of beauty vouchsafed to me! For he was watching me, and with a quick flutter of his wings he was gone. I saw but a second more of him—just a flurry of that rich blue—and the rest is memory.

I know now how wrong Davies was in his apostrophe :

> 'Thou hast no proud, ambitious mind.'

Perhaps the bird is not ambitious, but are not such reserve and such selfishness as his, pride ? He does not want us to see him, and we must spy upon him like creatures of a lesser order for but a glance of his beauty. Oh, he is a proud bird who thus keeps himself to himself, too haughty to share his colours with us, haunting 'the lonely pools' and keeping company only with 'trees that weep.'

I wonder how many times Davies saw him. Probably often, for had he not the time and the opportunity ? But I understand now that once would have been enough to originate a poem in such a man. Poets, no less than other men, must be thankful for small mercies.

So my kingfisher had gone, and the precious moment was passed. I walked away, a little sadly perhaps, from that 'quiet place,'

> 'That's green, away from all mankind,'

and rejoined the ladies pushing prams, the swans and the ducks and the hunger-mad gulls ; and as I walked back into modern times I found myself pondering on this phenomenon of beauty and this kingfisher and what men had made of him. Is it all true ? and what does it all signify ? The questions came tumbling into my mind, to sickly o'er with the pale cast of thought the absolute pleasure of unthinking exultation in the physical excitement of seeing glorious colours alive in the shape of a bird. I was a man again, asserting my human prerogative : like Lawrence when he threw the 'clumsy log' at the snake, I was the victim of my 'accursed human education.'

I thought too of my rationalist friend and what he would say. 'My dear fellow,' he would expostulate, 'come to your senses, for goodness sake. You saw a handsome bird, alright—why all this fuss ? And as for all this Davies nonsense, this resurrection of the pathetic fallacy, which surely men buried with Longfellow for very shame—it's alright for the simple and the childish but—a bird proud indeed ! talking about the mind of a bird ! and speaking like a silly woman to her pekinese pet ! And what's the first line ? 'It was the Rainbow gave thee birth.' Just a pretty-pretty round-the-mulberry-bush way of saying that its colours are like those of the rainbow ! '

So I moved further and further away from the kingfisher until now I can barely see him for all the cobwebs and the mist. It is dark now around the little island, and I sit surrounded by books, the accumulated evidence of our human prerogative. The day is almost done and tomorrow will come, and the dilemma of those afterthoughts, so far from being solved, will become still more confused. Daily the complexity will increase—if it is allowed to—for the more we think the more thinking we have to do to straighten out what we have already thought.

What is the dilemma seen as clearly as it can be ? On the one hand, I saw a kingfisher for the first time and, true to tradition and convention, considered and called it 'beautiful on the other hand,

there ensued a clamour of cognitive reactions to the use of that word, I remembered a poem and I heard the criticism of a rationalist. On the one hand, there is simplicity, however irrational, and on the other complexity, however intellectual.

First of all, then, there is the problem of the meaning of the word 'beauty.' What do I mean by it? and what does the generality of men mean by it? Do our interpretations agree? What have 'great men through the ages' thought and said about it? (And who are the 'great' men anyway?) Is there a 'mighty abstract' idea of beauty apart from those objects which men, for some reason or other, have deemed and do deem beautiful?

So Plato enters the lists, and if Plato, then those who have followed him and accepted and developed his theories and those who have not accepted them and their disciples. And when all these philosophers and scribes have been read, there is the task of deciding to which camp if either one belongs, and if neither then whither one will turn next for advice and satisfaction. It is a task and a journey which could monopolise the rest of one's mortal days.

Then there are such things to consider as the tradition and convention to which I was faithful in my acclamation of the bird. Whence came they? Are they worth maintaining? Must one not be very sceptical of doing things merely because they are 'done'?

And there is the bird himself, poor thing. Does he think? Has he a mind? Did he fly away in selfishness and pride, or merely because he was impelled to by the instinct of self-preservation? And as for his colours, beautiful or not, they may look differently to different people, and what beauty in the kingfisher can he see who is colour-blind?

I have also to ask myself why I have liked Davies's poem. In fact, do I like it now that I come to think of it in this way? Or have I only pretended to? Or have I only imagined I do because I was told at school that it is a 'good' poem? And what is a good poem? What, indeed, is poetry? All these questions I must answer to my own satisfaction at least if I am to assert my super-bestial prerogative and avoid being a glib, dogmatic, uncritical aunt-sally exposed to the brickbats of the rationalistist iconoclasts. I must be able to defend that first line—which contains the very stuff of poetry—or agree that it is silly and indefensible.

There are other confusions, perhaps more than I yet realise. The forest of the mind thickens and the path through the undergrowth begins to disappear. The overhanging branches will shut out the light if they are not lopped off without delay. White men cannot live contentedly in jungles. They need communications with the outside world, and, above all, they need to see the light. Most of those, indeed, who have penetrated into the thickness, the heat and the steam wish only to get out and never return, wishing too that they had never entered But having entered a path out must be

hacked away. Either all the questions must be answered, or as many of them as possible, and that as soon as possible; or else they must be denied importance and reduced to the level of the conversation after dinner, playthings like chess and the crossword. Such would seem to be the choice before us. And yet is there not a third and a more satisfying alternative which we may proclaim against all comers? That although theories of art and ideas may be worked out if one feels that way disposed, although the authority of the philosopher may be consulted by those who think they need it, and the demands of the champions of pellucidity admitted as justifiable by those who have no faith, there is yet something more important than all these things: that on such and such a day a kingfisher was seen for the first time, and, 'wonder's breath indrawn,' was considered and called beautiful:

> 'Let logic analyse the hive,
> Wisdom's content to have the honey;
> So I'll go bite the crust of things and thrive
> While hedgerows still are sunny.'

FORGOTTEN TIME

If we could see in the man
The child as he began,
We might have faith
In the heart beneath.

If we that look could sense
Eager for all experience,
We might lament
Disillusionment.

If we could see the lip
Quiver, or the uncertain step,
We might betray
Sympathy.

If we could know the ache
When heart no help could seek,
We might assess
Lost happiness.

W. J. STRACHAN

AUTUMN

ELIZABETH MYERS

I DUNNO. Every time I went to the hospital to see my girl Primrose, she looked better than ever. Eyes sparkling and red in her cheeks. Wonderful!

But the doctors, one and all, shook their silly heads, and the better Primrise looked the worse *they* told me she was. I always do think doctors are a belly-aching crew, even though they may be right from their outlook.

I will admit that Primrose was whipcord thin. She was so thin it hurt her even to sit in the bath, and nurse used to put a folded towel down for her under the water.

Well—Prim and me were happy.

Every Sunday afternoon I was there from two till half-past four —it was all we had together out of the week as visiting is restricted in them isolation places.

Of a Monday morning my boss at the rolling-mill would say:—

'Well, Ed, how's your girl this week?'

'Fine. Fine,' I'd say. 'Coming out soon.'

One Monday he said:—

'Gawd's trewth, Ed! You been saying she's coming out for the last six months!'

I could not stand to hear this said. Boss or no boss, I turned on him:—

'She's got T. bloody B.,' I said. ''F you think *that* can be cured in five minutes, you got another guess comin',' I said, and waited for the sack.

He didn't look at me; he looked down, and said in a low voice:—

'Sorry, Ed. I didn't know that,' and went away, slow.

'Funny,' I thought, getting on with the job. 'You never know whether people'll bite you or lick your hand!'

Half-way through summer I made that certain Prim 'ud be coming home soon, I started to plan something stunning for when she did. Nothing common, you understand, but a real slap-up celebration.

I worked out that we were going to have a dinner—at night—in a toff restaurant, and after—stalls at a classy play!

I'd money enough—been saving for months! No, the thing that worried me was what I'd wear. I knew Prim 'ud be all right;

the less girls wear on them occasions the more correct it is.

I didn't know who to ask, either. Chaps I knew, o' course, never wore anything besides overalls and ready-mades. Even the boss at the rolling-mill never soared beyond a seven-guinea lounge suit. Anyroad, it wouldn't have been proper to ask *him;* he'd have thought I was getting ideas above meself. Besides, he might have give me the sack!

In the end I wrote to the editor of a man's monthly that my brother Art used to take in before he went to America as an accountant in my uncle's New York office. Had all the brains, our Art. Me—I never was famous for my head-piece. It used to make me wonder, sometimes, what Prim saw in me. 'How comes she loves me?' I'd ask meself. She's been to High School and was always reading books. Scared me, at times, all that reading.

Anyroad, I wrote to this editor and began to take the magazine, looking through the *Answers to Correspondents* page for the clearing-up of my problem.

The Sundays rushed by and every time one come it was like fireworks or flowers or something. Lovely!

One Sunday I was standing with all the other gabbing visitors waiting for Sister to say 'Go,' when we would all scurry off to those we had come to see.

On the stroke of two Sister come out of her office. She was short, with a red face like boiled tomatoes, and she always seemed angry about somethin'. She gave the nod and we all made a lunge at the stairs, but she called to me:—

'Just a minute!'

I went to her. Likely she was going to tell me off about something. She said:—

'Come into my office.'

When I got inside, she was standing in front of her gas-fire, red hands on her glistenin' apron, and she said, staring into the fire:—

'I'm sorry, very sorry, but Primrose died this morning!

I said, 'What?' I said.

So she tola me again.

I looked at her, helpless.

The bag of oranges I was clutching and the stationery and powder-puff Prim had asked me to bring her seemed suddenly to be daft things without meaning. Kor! Why grow oranges, and what's the sense in bits of coloured silk to dab your face with? Idiotic!

Then, without warning, this Sister, who anyone would agree

was tough, began to cry. I stood, and she brought out that one of the other patients had lent Prim a book called *Wuthering Heights* or something, and Prim, knowing what was coming to her, had tried all she knew to finish that book before she died; she did not finish it.

'It isn't,' said the Sister, 'that death itself upsets me—God knows, I see enough of *that;* it's just that—well—it seemed as heroic as any military virtue—the way she tried to finish that book before . . . before . . .'

And she was off again.

I thought, standing there—wisht I could cry.

Wisht my damn' heart felt like heart an' not a brick.

Sister. gulped :—

'Her people are with her now. You go along as well.'

I couldn't bear to.

She'd gone, hadn't she? Where's the sense going staring down at a corpse? People love doing this. I dunno why. A corpse is *nothing*, is it? Or is it?

Besides, I knew Prim's pa would be there. He was the fruity sort of chap such as I always want to poke in the eye. But I never had, thinking about Prim, thinking she'd be upset if I clouted her old man. I'd kep' meself in hand, but now there was no reason to sit on the lid, so I thought it best not to set eyes on him.

I went trailing out of the hospital—oranges, powder-puff an' all. I come to, an' see these things in my arms. A little girl is standing against the wall.

'Here!' I says, shoving the parcels on to her. 'Present for you! Don't say nobody never gev you nothin'!'

I wandered off into the country behind the sanatorium.

It was autumn.

Once, when I was a kid, my mother tells how she come on me crying.

'What's to do?' she asked me.

And it seems all I could blurt out was :—

'It's autumn!'

So it must be plain what autumn meant for me. Even down through the years.

The woods seemed on fire. There was a robin bouncing about at the foot of a tree. Conies slipped among the gold fern, and away on some pond you could hear the male frogs chorusing. All this was something to see. I suppose there was enough beauty all about to make the senses ache, but I walked, hands in my

pockets, and none of it came near me. I was burnt-out.

It got evening. The sky was thick with stars—like masses of glittering peas. I looked at 'em—there was nothing else to look at.

Home in my back-room that faced on to the railway, I lay eye-wide awake all night, listening to the stuttering of trains up the grade—trains going by in the night, making me think of travelling I'd never have, sitting beside Prim, and coming at last to a place of our own where the evening light would be that rusty way it sometimes is. Soft—thinking all that, thinking 'bout two thin warm arms drawing me down. I did it to try and cry. Thought I'd feel better if I could cry. Everyone else seemed able to sound off good and proper. My mother never stopped.

But it was no go. I went about my business—quiet, stunned. I never spoke unless spoken to, and then answered civilly, without betraying meself. Nothing seemed to have purpose in it.

A few days later I was sitting under the window. I'd had my tea; my coat was off. I was holding up a magazine as though I was trying to catch the fading light, but I wasn't reading a thing.

'Ed,' says my mother, 'you been at that one page half an hour. 'F you don't watch you—you goin' to go outer your mind!'

'I don't wanter do that, do I?' I says, and began turning the pages, hasty.

And then I see me own initials and home town at the top of a letter from the editor. It was the answer to what I'd asked about. I read the words of advice. I read 'em several times.

'. . . and the full dress suit need not be worn at the function you mention. A dinner-suit will be quite correct . . . plain gold-studs . . . and the single-bow tie . . .'

All at once the sorrow pent up inside me burst. Scalding grief spurted through all my nature. I winked desperately at the carpet. Sounds came into my throat. I couldn't quell 'em. I blundered out to the back-yard.

On top of a waist-high shed out there my mother had planted fuchsias and asters in pots and old pans. These flowers seemed to have been waiting for me to come out, some'ow. Anyroad, I went to 'em, an' cried till I knew no more.

A ROMANTIC STORY

BENJAMIN CANTAMIR

THE wind on the *Gottfriedstrasse* was high ; Konrad Mergel held his hat in his hand and allowed the wind to ruffle his long black hair, and even when the heavy forelock fell over his right eye he did not trouble to push it back. As he strode along the street, looking fixedly in front of him, he did not seem to care what was about him or what the towns-folk thought of his tall, dishevelled figure, his young-old face with deep set eyes and death-white skin, his long black cloak that was falling off one shoulder and gathering dust as he walked. He did not care if they stared at him as he went by and whispered to each other about him, or that mothers warned their daughters against him. He was perversely delighted with his reputation. He did not care. What were these fat, satisfied bourgeoisie, walking in domestic couples, pretending to the world a sham, ramshackle happiness, these wine-merchants, bakers, *Hofraths* and petty officials ? He despised and hated them.

The summer of 18— in the town of Dreikirchen had been for the most part cold and windy and the vines that clustered on the long, steep riverbanks had seen little sun to bring them to ripeness. The old men sitting in the piled up vine-yards talked together of the good days when the land was happy and the government good. 'A bad government never brought good weather,' old Maldus would say and his friend the Zollbeamte would reply 'A bad government never brought anything good.' There was a feeling of helplessness in the hearts of the people of Dreikirchen. Things were not good and life was hard. There was wickedness, ruthlessness and cruelty everywhere and the old people looked back on the days when the land was happy and the young felt a void, an indetermination in life which they could not understand. They were looking for something that was not there ; what they did not know.

It was dark by the time Konrad Mergel turned off into the maze of little cobbled streets behind the *Rathaus*. He walked for some minutes before stopping outside a tall decaying house of medieval design whose storeys huddled formlessly on top of each other like the vine-yards on the riverbanks. He entered the house and climbed the creaking wooden stairs. Once he heard a scuffle higher up the stairs and a moment later felt the hairy softness of a rat against his leg as it ran past him. His room was on the top floor, a low ceilinged attic with worm eaten beams running across and bare creaking boards to walk on. His furniture was rough ; a table, a few chairs, and a low bed. All round the room were piles of books,

most of them bristling with pieces of paper which he had inserted for reference. Lessing, Klopstock, Herder, Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, Rousseau, Byron. On the table were some sheets of paper covered with small, even hand-writing.

For ten minutes Konrad Mergel busied himself cooking a meal, and when it was eaten he sat down at the table, lit his lamp made from a human skull, thought for some minutes and began to write.

'If, as Aristotle suggests,' he wrote, 'to pity is good since pity purifies the passions, how can he then say that pity is one of the passions? And if to view a tragedy excites in us a pity that purifies our pity, can there be an difference in these two passions? The one is artificial and the other is not. That is the only difference. But pity is the lowest of all human emotions. To pity or to love is to allow the weak, the relenting, the infirm in us to gain a victory over strength and ruthlessness. To know all is to forgive nothing. And it is the duty of the poet to forgive nothing, to pity nothing, to love nothing. Hatred must be the poet's chief inspiration. He must be relentless in his condemnation. He must look upon the world as innately evil and when confronted by apparent goodness he must look for the evil that is lurking behind it. But the poet must also be relentless with himself. His first study must be his entire self. He must search his soul, analyse it, know it completely, tempt it, torture it, hate it. And when he knows it he must cultivate it till it is horrible. The poet must know life through a protracted, reasoned and monstrous derangement of all his senses. And this is an ineffable self-torture which requires in him an absolute faith, a superhuman strength, under which he becomes the great accursed and the great sufferer. And this is because he has reached the unknown.'

His face was running with sweat and his heart was beating with emotion. The words had raced from his mind; it was almost as if they had been ranged in order as part of his existence waiting only for release from his brain. He sat back in his chair and read aloud what he had written. He imagined fancifully that he was now purged of them, that the liberated words would now have a separate existence apart from him. Then when he came to the sentence, 'He must search his soul, analyse it, know it completely, tempt it, torture it, hate it,' a feeling of terror came over him, which drained the blood from his face. 'What am I doing?' he cried, 'is this only torture of my soul, an I hating myself, forcing myself into something I do not wish to be? Is what I have written a part of me or a part of my self-torture. What am I? What do I want to be. Oh God, why must you keep us from ourselves? Do I really love you, and love the world, and love myself, or is this torture of my soul the necessary end?' Tears ran down his cheeks as he cried out loudly, 'Oh, God I want you but I do not know how to reach you.'

His body slumped over the table and he remained still for some minutes. When he recovered himself he wiped his forehead with his kerchief and taking up his pen wrote: 'To live among things unutterable, unheard of and horrible is the poet's Paradise. And the more monstrous his thought the greater his poetry.'

His mind felt serene. He was pleased with what he had written, it was a good essay. He would take it along to Frenzel's and see if there was anybody there with the intelligence to appreciate it.

He put on his hat and cloak, snuffed the candle and went out. The streets were dark and deserted. A few leaves discarded in a premature autumn, rustled in the wind as he walked. When he reached the *Marktplatz* the rustling seemed to have grown louder. The limes must give up their leaves quicker than the elms, he thought as he looked above him into the massive shivering branches of the limes. A moment later the clouds parted and a brilliant moon shone through. It was then that he saw the *Marktplatz* was full of pieces of paper, some large, some small, all scudding madly in the wind. The rustle of leaves he loved; for him they were corpses searching for a grave. But rustling paper was soulless; it had never been alive.

A moment before the clouds enwrapped the moon once more Konrad Mergel saw the tall scaffold outlined black against the sky, the noose swinging as gaily as a bunting rope. How beautiful it looked! Its simple, unadorned outlines, its perfect proportion! Gaunt, horrible and lovely, he thought, the most fitting symbol of the times. But what did he care how ruthlessly the tyrants used it? What was it to him, how many legal murders they committed in the name of order. 'Pity,' he said aloud, 'who cares for pity.' He lingered under the limes for some minutes hoping that the moon would again give him the wonderful sight he had just seen. But the clouds were thick and it was cold.

In Frenzel's he felt at home, for to Frenzel's drifted the unwanted of Dreikirchen. Gottfried Polzer, the *Schöffs'* son, who had broken his father's heart ten years before when he abducted the *Schultheiss's* daughter and deserted her in Venice where she had committed suicide in penury. Now he lived a drinking, wretched existence in Dreikirchen, tolerated by none but Konrad Mergel, enjoying this hatred. To Frenzel's, too, came Karlstob, Feinbeind and Gruhstäcker, the town pariahs, who drank away their sorrows together.

Konrad Mergel sat down at a table with Feinbeind and ordered a bottle of wine.

'Hail Frater Melancholico,' said Feinbeind. 'Where have you been these last days?'

'I've been walking near the *Kaumsee* for three days,' replied Konrad Mergel.

'The Kaumsee! Why have you been walking by the Kaumsee? What pleasure is to be obtained from walking by the Kaumsee? Explain Frater Doloroso!'

'I enjoy the wind coming across the lake and chilling my face. I enjoy bathing in the ice-cold water coming down from the Grünerberg. I enjoy thinking and meditating alone. Above all the solitude. I hate the company of other people.'

'Not even mine,' said Feinbeind. 'Now Frater Diabolo, that is unkind, for I enjoy your company more than anybody else's. With you I feel that whatever happened I could never sink into as deep a misery as yours. You have made sorrow a fine art. That is a good thing. There are not enough specialists in the world. We should have specialists in happiness, specialists in hatred, specialists in love—.'

'We have specialists in all those things.'

'True. But you are the most thorough specialist it has ever been my misfortune to meet. Frater Diabolo, you know nothing about anything but misery, wretchedness. You live in the night. You know nothing of the day.'

'And you? What do you know of the day?' said Konrad Mergel.

'A ha, my friend, more than you. Like other dregs I've sunk to the bottom, but I've known the top—and the middle too. I've seen life in every way, you've only seen it in one way. You say there is no such thing as pity, but I tell you, pity is everywhere.'

'I do not believe in pity.'

'But that does not mean that it doesn't exist.'

'I close my eyes to it,' said Konrad Mergel.

'But you said the other night that the poet must look at every side of life, the inaccessible as well as the accessible. And yet you hide from goodness, forgiveness, pity, purity, kindness. —Yes, I hide too, but I have reasons while you have none. You say you want to see all, but you see less than half.'

'Poetry is selection, and I have selected.'

'Then you will never be great,' said Feinbeind.

'I cannot help that.' Konrad Mergel drained his glass and poured out more wine.

A few moments later the door opened and a young girl with long black hair came in. She was excited and there were lights in her eyes. She saw Feinbeind and Konrad Mergel and half danced across to them. She sat down.

'Give me some wine,' she said. 'Quickly.'

'What is it, Aurelie,?' said Feinbeind, handing her the wine. 'What has excited you.?'

'It was at the execution today. I was standing under a tree when I saw a man—a stranger—with a fiddle on his back staring at me. Then he smiled and I smiled, and later he took me by the hand and we went into the fields by the river and he played for me —madly, it was unearthly—and I danced to his mad music and then when I was exhausted and my blood was hot he said he came to do Mephisto's work on earth, wandering in search of souls for his master and he began to play again until he had me in a trance, and then he

asked me for my soul and I gave it to him, willingly—I didn't struggle —and he went on playing and I lost consciousness and when I woke he had gone. And in my hand was a gold coin. Look!'

Konrad Mergel looked at her and an uncontrollable feeling of rage came over him. Involuntarily he shouted at her, 'You beast.' They've got you now! They've got you now! They'll take you with them!' He stood up and rushed out of the room.

'Take no notice of Konrad Mergel,' said Feinbeind. 'He's mad. He's angry because he wasn't in your place. He's making up for it by pretending to be shocked.'

The clouds had gone now and the streets were bathed in a white, eerie moonlight. The church clock struck two and the wind was silent. Konrad Mergel's footsteps seemed to echo from house-front to house-front as he walked over the cobbles As he went he looked furtively about him as if he expected to see somebody lurking in the shadows of the trees But the town was asleep and the streets empty. He was thinking about Aurelie and the fiddler and the execution. The execution explained all the paper in the *Marktplatz*, the crowd had left it behind them. He wished he had remembered about it; he would have come back earlier from the *Kaumsee*; he had not seen an execution for many months; a pity; a woman had murdered her husband so that she could go to her lover; a horrible murder. When he reached the *Marktplatz* he stood under the trees some hundred yards from the scaffold and once more marvelled at its perfect demonic beauty. Only one more thing, he felt was needed to complete its loveliness; a body, swinging on the rope. He moved his position and looked at it from all sides. 'What beauty there is in horror,' he thought, 'a beauty far greater than others because it is horrible. Who would not rather have the dreadful loveliness of Medusa than the soulless beauty of Venus Anodyomene?'

He climbed the steps on to the platform of the scaffold and, taking the rope in his hands pulled it till it would give no more. 'How soft it is,' he thought as he rubbed his hands against it, 'it kills so kindly; a gentle murderer.' He put the noose around his neck and then, holding the rope above him with his hands, raised his feet from the ground. The pressure round his neck was great; but he swung for a few moments with as much pleasure as a child upon a swing. He lowered himself and took his head from the noose.

It was at that moment that he became aware that he was not alone. Something white was moving soundlessly among the shadows of the trees to his left. He felt a tremble of curious fear, but it had passed in a moment.

'Who is there?' he cried out.

'Come down,' a woman's voice called, 'come down.'

'Why should I come down. What is it to you? But a moment later he left the platform and walked towards the white figure in the shadows.

They looked at each other in silence. She was a young girl, slim with a clear innocent face and long, fair hair which lay loose about her shoulders. Her face had the purity which Konrad Mergel had leant to hate; but his hate was only a perverted form of love, just as his love was a perverted form of hate.

'Who are you? What are you doing here?' he asked.

'I have nowhere to go,' she said. 'I have been sleeping on the seat over there. You woke me as you were climbing the steps of the scaffold.'

'I'm sorry. What is your name?'

'Madelene Rabenspiegel.'

'Do you live in Dreikirchen?'

'I used to,' she replied, 'but now I'm alone. I live nowhere. I drift from town to town, from place to place, used to the wind and the cold, and my dress which tonight you think is beautiful, will be worn and in tatters, and my face without a line will be furrowed and my eyes dulled, and my cheeks sallowed and my hair lank with dirt. For tonight I start on a journey, a vagabond, earning as I may and drifting sad about the world in search of nothing.'

'Have you ever known any happiness?' asked Konrad Mergel.

'Yes, I was happy once. We are all happy once, but when it is over we are never happy again. But I do not complain. I love the world, and though I have not had the best from it it has good things to give.'

'What took your happiness away?'

'I am unhappy because I am good.'

'Yes, you are good. I knew you were good. I can see purity in every part of you. But the good are always happy. It is sufficient to make them happy that they are good. It is the wicked who are unhappy because they cannot be good.'

'But the wicked can wield their power of evil over the good and make the good wretched. That is why I am wretched. And what of you? You, too, are wretched. Death has no sting for you. I saw you just now with the rope round your neck, toying with death. Why do you want death?'

'I do not want death. I am fascinated by it, but I am afraid of it.'

'You are fascinated by it *because* you are afraid of it.'

'Yes,' said Konrad Mergel. 'But I do not want it.'

'And are you, too, fascinated by evil?'

'I am,' said Konrad Mergel.

'Why?' she asked.

'I do not know.'

'And would you not rather be fascinated by good?'

'Yes,' said Konrad Mergel.

'Then I will fascinate you—and I am good.'

Konrad Mergel said nothing. Both his body and mind felt weak and subdued; almost functionless. It was as if this strange

and beautiful creature had numbed all his resistance. She could do with him whatever she wished. He could not understand her; nor could he understand himself; for, as she had said he was fascinated by her. Her eyes which looked deep into his, almost hypnotised him.

She took him by the hand.

'I am coming with you,' she said. 'Take me to your home.'

Obediently he guided her towards his home. Her hand was soft and smooth and cold in his and he clutched it as he used to clutch his mother's hand when she comforted him in bed.

Konrad Mergel felt little passion; his nature was not sensual. But that night he found himself in love. Madalene Rabenspiegel caressed his face with her light fingers, talked to him in a low, beautiful voice, of the streams in the Marienberg and of the setting sun across the mountain tops; she described the playing of the lambs in the valleys and the singing of the shepherds and the revels of the fruitgatherers at harvest time and on her lips all life became beauty and all humanity kind and good. With her strange charms she had him in thrall. He felt happy and he knew that it was through her that he felt happy, and he told her his love with grace and ease. She took him in her arms and kissed him, and ran her fingers through his hair. He touched her smooth cheek, and his fingertips tingled with the satisfaction of touch. Her lips were warm and soft to his own and her cheeks were cooling. He was experiencing beautiful emotions which he had never known before.

He remembered what he had written earlier in the evening '. . . a monstrous derangement of the senses!' Was that what he was doing now? Was all this glory merely monstrous derangement? Or had he at last loosed from him the horrible cloak of evil and aspired to something pure! And with this last thought he was pleased, for never before had he admitted to himself that goodness was what he wanted and evil was what he hated. He had been a sham, a poseur walking through life with a facade of evil that hid a repressed and unadmitted desire for goodness. In the morning he would burn all that he had written. Through Madalene Rabenspiegel he had found himself and what he wanted most. Flames shot in his body, searing glorious flames that rushed through the vast system of veins, catharising as they went. And a great satisfaction came over him as he fell asleep.

The colours of his dreams were pale. Pale blues mixed with pale greens and rose pinks and gentle marjoram, the flower of goodlihead. His body drifted easily through soft, pale clouds. And as he soared all that he saw was light. No shadows were cast as a cloud crossed the blazing path of the rays of the sun, and all he saw was warm.

Suddenly a terrible, agonised cry sounded through the dream and the clouds, the brightness and colours were out from him in a second. Madalene Rabenspiegel lay still, but her face was con-

vulsed in a rigid expression of agony. He was appalled by the ghastliness of her expression, and for a moment covered his eyes.

'Madalene,' he said softly, but she did not move. 'Madalene,' he cried louder. On the fichu which she wore about her neck was a small patch of blood. He undid the fichu and laid bare her neck; encircling it like a necklace was a deep red mark, and the skin was rough and broken and bleeding slightly. The mark was the mark of a scaffold noose. He put his hand to her heart. She was dead.

* * * *

Konrad Mergel burnt his manuscripts that day, broke the skull lamp into a thousand pieces, and putting his possessions into a sack, set off along the river valley towards the East. For three days he walked over the mountains, hardly caring where he went, and living on a few berries which he found by the way. Many times he stood on a high rock and tried to jump from it, but each time some force prevented him. And as he sat and watched the setting sun over the *Hochberg* he remembered Madalene Rabenspiegel's descriptions. By the third day he had passed through a state of bitter misery into one of resignation. Suffering, he felt, was necessary. And now, for the first time, he was experiencing suffering. A strange strength came over him, a strength which he knew he would not lose. And on the morning of the fourth day he came upon the monastery of the Theatin friars that stands at the north-east end of the Frühlingsee in the Obertal. He was admitted as a brother novitiate, pursued his studies in theology with great piety and learning, and two years later took his final oaths as a Friar of the Theatin Brotherhood.

FROM 'THE NORTH SEA'

3. The Castaway

HEINRICH HEINE

Hope and love! All dashed to pieces!
And I myself, like a corpse
Which the sea has cast up in its anger,
I lie on the beach,
On the desolate, naked beach.
Before me rolls the waste of waters,
Behind me are only trouble and misery,
And over me drift away the clouds,
The formlessly grey daughters of air,
Who draw up the water out of the sea
In pails of mist,
And trail and trail it laboriously,
And again hail it down into the sea,
A dreary, monotonous occupation,
And profitless, like my own life.

The waves murmur, the seagulls shriek,
Old recollections blow to me softly;
Forgotten dreams, extinguished pictures,
Painfully sweet, of a sudden emerge.

There lives a woman in the North,
A beautiful woman, regally beautiful.
The slender cypress-form
A white, lascivious dress imprisons;
The dark abundance of locks,
Like a blessed night,
From the comb-crowned head pouring down in waves
Curls itself dreamfully sweet
Around the sweet, pale face,

And out of the sweet, pale face,
Large and powerful, glitters an eye,
Like a black sun.

O, you black sun, how often,
Deliciously often, I drank from you
The wild flames of enthusiasm,
And stood and reeled, drunken with fire,
For there played a dove-soft smile
Round the deeply-pursed, proud lips,
And the deeply-pursed, proud lips
Breathed low words, sweet as moonlight
And tender as the breath of the rose—
And my soul drew itself up
And flew, like an eagle, into heaven !

Silent, you waves and gulls !
Over is all, fortune and hope,
Hope and love. I lie on the tide-floor,
A barren, shipwrecked man,
And press my burning face
In the humid sand.

Translated by VERNON WATKINS

THE LONG PURSUIT; AND SEARCH FOR A SYNTHESIS

A Review of the Poetry of Francis Berry and David Gascoyne

DALLAS KENMARE

ONE of the results of 'contumelious, beastly, mad-brain'd war' is usually a more wide-spread (though it could scarcely be said a deeper or more satisfactory) interest in religion. The popular newspapers tend to publish short weekly anthologies on *What Religion Means to Me*, by various famous, or notorious, persons, and one of the most widely-read books of the 1914-18 war (recently re-issued) was called *Is God Dead?* In short, God, usually ignored or forgotten, comes into His own when there is trouble. Similarly, people with no belief in prayer commonly invoke the Deity in times of crisis, and then complain that their prayers are not answered. They use God as a convenience only, and blame Him when He seems to turn a deaf ear. The irrelevant question 'Why does God allow the war?' is on lips which habitually use His name only as a light oath. But indeed, if God is in any way blameworthy, or a fit subject for man's criticism, it is only for having presented man with a gift he uses so badly, the gift of free-will. God can scarcely be held responsible, having made man *free*, if His stupid children persistently choose the way diametrically opposed to the one He would have them choose. Therefore, it is not a question of God 'allowing' war, but of man making wrong choices.

At the present time there are urgent demands for a 'new' Christianity, again, an irrelevant demand. There can never be a new Christianity; all that is needed is perfect understanding of the truths revealed by the Founder of Christianity, and expounded in the Gospels. These truths are so profound, so inclusive, that even the greatest of religious geniuses has been able to glimpse no more than a fraction of their ultimate meanings. In them lies the only hope for the world's salvation. But as Shelley was so well aware, Truth is too often obscured and eventually destroyed by those who believe themselves qualified to explain it. Jesus's gravest rebukes were directed at the scribes and Pharisees, those who preached God's Word and usually misinterpreted it. So, vitally necessary as a Church, an organised body of Christians, would seem to be, the fact yet remains that the Church is largely responsible for the ever-growing discontent with and misunderstanding of, religion.

This realisation is so powerful in Mr. Francis Berry's new poem, *Fall of a Tower* (Fortune Press, 5s.), that the only hope for the world seemed to lie in blowing up the Tower, in other words, in destroying the Church. Everyone lived greyly under the shadow of 'This Church, this Tower, this gorgon bully of the Town,' and

> . . . The time to come
> Is changed when that Tower's down.
>
> 'This Church was an ugly, eternally-lasting mother, and brooded in huge sloth over a dwarfed progeny of houses.'

The altar 'worships misery with totem of a skull.' Under the influence of the Church 'the Town was inert and gripped.'

> The square Tower was—without beginning or end—in an act of harsh command; the Town was prone in sufferance.

So the Church must go. Until it was destroyed men and women would continue to live in shadow, inert and gripped, debarred from worshipping their true Lord, the Sun:

> Lord, Sun, Glory Sun: Sir, all radiant now
> Shalt thou be summoned to thy throne by those
> Subject too long to shadow of the Tower
> A usurping tyrant: soon to thy radiant house
> Lord Sun admit us, O Father of world-life
> Deliver us from the Shadow of Tower-Death.

This desire for sun-worship, belief in its great power, recalls D. H. Lawrence:

> Men should group themselves into a new order of sun-men,
> Each one turning his breast straight to the sun of suns in the centre of things. . .
>
> . . . walking each in his own sun-glory. . .
>
> Begin wholly afresh. Go straight to the sun, the immense forces of the universe, to the Entity unknown; go higher than a god, deeper than prayer; and open a new day.

But Lawrence was content with sun-worship as such; he doubtless felt it to be self-sufficient. As Mr. Dion Byngham has recently pointed out.*, most authentic worships have been solar of origin and 'sol and soul are in essence one and the same; even as to language similarly derived.' So sun-worship does indeed go very deep. But Mr. Berry attempts a strange synthesis, born of a strange necessity—(what would Lawrence have thought of it?)

In his Foreword to *Fall of a Tower*, Mr. Berry remarks that the poem was written before he became a Catholic, but that he feels no need of repentance for the poem. In the poem there is an attempt

* *Little Reviews Anthology*, p. 182. Allen & Unwin.

to equate the Sun with Christ, in other words, to bring about a fusion of pagan sun-worship with Christian worship * :

> Jerusalem—sing Allelujah to the Jesus-Sun,

and the poem ends with a remarkable paraphrase of the Benedicite :

> O ye Angels of the Lord, O magic Hints, subtle Musics, quick Glimpses, fine Frenzies, Rainbows of the Mind, Radio of senses, bless ye the Lord : praise and magnify your Sun for ever. . .
>
> O Sun, compassionate and Wise, Powerful and kind, now you arise all sunless organised wars will cease. Glory be to the Sun, as it was in the beginning, was lost, and is returned, O Jesus-Sun, Christ without end. Amen.

This long and rather striking paraphrase is marred by one somewhat comic lapse into what can only be interpreted as an appeal for nudism, and there is of course the obvious criticism that the Benedicite, in common with all supremely great works of art, is really beyond paraphrase.

Mr. Berry says that the poem ' was rather prophetic.'

> It symbolises the need for the destruction of old falsities and a re-establishment of convincing dogmas, the need for clarity, definitions.'

But it is an uneasy synthesis, and more than one reader will have difficulty in reconciling Catholic dogma with sun-worship, though few will deny the pressing need for a religion flooded with the life-giving, vitalising elements of the sun, in one sense certainly the Lord and Giver of Life.

The ethical and theological questionings however do not, and should not, detract from the value of the work as poetry, which is independent of, because beyond, moral and religious values. Poetically, there is nothing disappointing in Mr. Berry's latest work, and the description of the explosion, followed by the hymn of praise to the sun (far more satisfying than the paraphrase of the Benedicite), climb to terrific heights of poetic power.

> With lightning trumpets gleaming down the dawn
> Lift banners brave
> Gleam-trumpets blow
> Cruise through the violet fairways of the sky
> Your strong notes to the East's crowned Sun

are lines that will not easily be forgotten, nor the description of the bells in the prose-section linking the poetry, a curious but effective technical device, especially when the prose is excellent, powerful,

* There is, however, some justification for this. According to Democritus, ' Deity is but a soul in an orbicular fire,' and that fire is the Son. For Iamblichus the sun was the ' the image of divine intelligence ' ; for Plato ' an immortal living being.' And the oracle of Claros when asked to say who was Jehovah of the Jews answered ' It is the Sun.' . . From these premises H. P. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine* states that ' Jehovah then is the Sun, and thence also the Christ of the Roman Church.'

condensed and clear-cut, as this is. And among the remaining sixteen poems in the book, all blazing with an often startling originality, *The Devil* is outstanding, dark and ominous and inevitable, recalling the sombre doom of El Greco's *Agony in the Garden.*

There seem to be certain affinities between Mr. Berry's work and the *Poems* 1937-1942 of David Gascoyne (Nicholson & Watson, 8s. 6d.), though it is rather difficult to decide whether the apparent similarity exists between the poetry itself, or a quality in Francis Berry's poems somewhat akin to the fiery, strange and often passionately macabre illustrations to Mr. Gascoyne's poems. It may be said in passing that illustrations to poems are rarely helpful, or necessary, and Mr. Gascoyne's work is certainly far too good to need any pictorial aid.

But what is the precise significance of the uneasiness that suffuses almost all the verse, all the art, indeed, of the last ten or fifteen years? Is the tragic sense of blood-suffering simply indicative of our blood-sodden age? Or is it the inevitable result of the sense of disintegration and futility so aptly expressed in the poem *From a Diary*, beginning:

> Imperfections of substance, dross of the day-by-day;
> Banality, unlove and disappointment. . . Grey
> Webs of attrition, and the trivial tick
> Of the nerves' run-down clock,*

and tragically in *An Elegy*, to the memory of a young suicide of twenty-five. There is something inherently wrong when the lives of the young men and women of any age are 'hurried, confused and unfulfilled,' so wrong that it cannot be that war, and the shadow of war, is responsible, but rather that, conversely, this confused sense of disillusion, futility and disintegration, arising inevitably from a life unco-ordinated through lack of a vital faith, itself leads to war, natural outcome of a period of materialism and despair. The railway book-stalls have for some time been overflowing with books published by a firm of frankly atheist, or as they call it, rationalist, convictions. The title of one of the books is *What Man has gained through Unbelief.* It would be more 'rational,' i.e. reasonable, to write on what man has lost. The evidences are abundant everywhere.

Mr. Gascoyne, like Mr. Berry, is a true poet, and, again, the ideas expressed in some of the poems cannot detract from the æsthetic value of the work. The religious poems in the section 'Miserere' are especially good, notably the final poem *Ecce Homo*:

> . . . we are onlookers at the crime,
> Callous contemporaries of the slow
> Torture of God. . . .

* This oppression of futility may be compared with the description of Edmund's walk in the prose-section of *Fall of a Tower.*

and the beautiful last stanza :

> Not from a monstrance silver-wrought
> But from the tree of human pain
> Redeem our sterile misery,
> Christ of Revolution and of Poetry,
> That man's long journey through the night
> May not have been in vain.

And the same strong hope that endures beyond tragedy is voiced in the poem *Cavatina :*

> Yet through disaster a faint melody
> Insists ; and the interior suffering like a silver wire

> Enduring and resplendent, strongly plied
> By genius's hands into a searching fire
> At last emerges and is purified.

> Its force like violins in pure lament
> Persists, sending ascending stairs
> Across the far wastes of the firmament
> To carry starwards all our weight of tears.

None of the poems in the book are ' war-poems,' though they overrun the time of the outbreak of war by three years. There are only oblique references to it. For this reason alone they will endure, and will be read when all the war-poets are forgotten, and everyone has long wearied of the

> poison of the News, which every hour
> Contaminates the æther.*

Mr. Gascoyne and Mr. Berry share a timeless vision, a sense of cosmic significance, and, as a result, a proper sense of proportion. Poets must be to a certain extent Olympians, or, in the words of Mr. Berry, ' Golden eagles soaring over sparrows' quarrels.'† At one time they were recognised as seers, and their utterances as prophetic. One day this belief will return. Then there will be hope for a world that now stumbles blindly through a wilderness.

* *Walking at Whitsun.* May, 1940.

† *The Devil.*

APROPOS HENRY MILLER

DEAR NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE,

Thanks for your letter and the booklet *Henry Miller*, by Nicholas Moore, published by the Opus Press at a shilling. You think that I am an apt *critic* for this booklet. I am going to disillusion you ; I can't really criticise it. I've read it and I think Moore has done as skilful a job as is humanly possible in the thirty or so pages at his disposal. Besides, I am biased in favour of Miller in this way : his writing gave me new confidence and inspiration. Miller can't make a living at writing and a man like Michael Arlen is paid almost a thousand pounds for a story ! This reveals the whole nuisance and gangrene of our age. We *think* we are civilised. We *think* we are progressive. Some of us expect little from statesmen, social and economic theorists, and the like, but expect honesty and guidance from good creative artists. A man like Miller will get little or no protection from a society which is not made up of *complete* individualism. For Miller is a *complete* individualist. In his writing he gives the impression of being as unafraid as death. Moore writes, ' His *joie de vivre* is immense.' Maybe. It might be a *joie de vivre* born of the opposite : a great despair and darkness which falls over some at a certain moment when they gaze at the abyss, the great emptiness. And then the transmutation : the groping for the healing hand. Some think that Miller's philosophy is patterned rather on D. H. Lawrence's blood *mystique*. I don't think that is quite so. Both believe in the healing power of Eros, but Lawrence's unresolved hidden shame and *sense* of inferiority led, in my opinion, to some detestable things in his make-up. I may be wrong, but such traits may and do sometimes produce cataleptic criminals like Hitler. When Lawrence doodles and meanders, he is often boring and prone to get himself tied up in knots like an irate Donald Duck. Miller in a similar predicament is often at his best : exhilarating, symphonic. Is this purely a matter of technique ? No. Never are spirit, content or ideology so bound up with form and method of expression as with the writers like Miller and Lawrence. Partisanship, the bursting open of the floodgates of primitive aggression, momentous suspense that allows for hope and even great faith : these and other

forces and feelings are compounded into a war ethos for practically the whole of this planet at the moment. It is this ethos that has obscured, banished the quicksands we have recently lived through. I do not mean to say that this ethos has been a remedy; it is one of those ephemeral and violent antidotes that history sometimes produces for the precocious and tempestuous patient that is mankind. I wish to say that in the very recent pre-war days those who took it upon themselves to think and feel for us needed the ingredients of well-defined faiths and ideologies to even begin to impress their anxious audiences. There was less room then for the analytical, non-partisan and negative viewpoints. Crutches were needed. We need them all the time, really. But in the pre-war days the quicksands seemed enormously threatening. To me, Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* is a wonderful picture of those quicksands. The gangrene, the cancer, as Miller chooses to call it. Miller did a remarkable thing. He combatted the cancer by accepting it, by succumbing to it, by living through it. And also by dying in a certain way as all very sentient men do. And great things and work, different to that produced by the Napoleons, Henry Fords and even Noel Cowards of this our world, come from the minds and hearts of men who have faced that certain death and died. Moore quotes Orwell as saying of Miller, '. . . he is a completely negative, unconstructive, amoral writer, a mere Jonah, a passive acceptor of evil, a sort of Whitman among the corpses.' That is rather a poor show coming from a man like Orwell! Poor because it lacks psychological perception. A complex or rather the waste and disintegration that a complex causes is often neutralised by revealing the *trauma*, dragging the wound into the light and seeing what it is all about. Incidentally this is bad advice to imbeciles. Miller examines the *trauma* of a period in his cancer book, magnificently. Orwell's comment makes no sense to me. I'm sorry. With Miller it was the acceptance and death from the cancer and the promise of another life: wisdom of the heart, the complete life however much society says no, individualism, the conception of an anarchy that is perhaps an unattainable state. Moore reminds us also that Orwell implies that Miller portrays decadence so well because he really loves it. Has Orwell never reflected on the meaning of a word like *ambivalent* or, if that is too Freudian for him, dualism? Yes, of course, Miller must have loved that great Parisian twilight which was also the great twilight of the pre-war world. Drank it right to the dregs. Some of us do cut off our noses to spite our faces, especially when

we are hurt. Spirits that are broken by society often protest against that very society by allowing themselves to be destroyed by it. Unheroic? Sometimes. And sometimes not. As I have said before, a new life, a new outlook and a greater impetus to live can come from such a death. Also there is something bigger than individual will—a wave in history, an ethos, etc.—that makes men destroy themselves consciously or unconsciously. Decadence can be as attractive and exhilirating as the lovely and abnormally Narcissistic woman who, in her thinly disguised primitiveness, is very likely to ruin her lover. Decadence can be as thrilling an experience as that of the aviator or alpinist who goes on a dangerous journey from which he is not likely to return. For men strive to look into the eyes of God and the Devil. One can despise and also be thrilled by an Ichabod time. I don't think I like Moore's insistent references to the affinities between Miller and William Saroyan. I admire Saroyan up to a certain point, but he is not as authentic or mature as he would have us believe. I should add that the healthiest wave of history where integration flourishes contains the germs of its own death even as the great twilight which we have just witnessed had within it a great new promise and a possible way. Miller caught a glimpse of the latter. With best wishes to you.

Very sincerely yours,

HUGO MANNING

North Africa.

March, 1944.

OBITUARY

We regret to record the death of Captain Michael Allmand who founded this magazine and who died in Burma during June, 1944. He has been posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. To his parents we extend our deepest sympathy.